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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Gentlemen, Please accept our comments regarding the Helena-Lewis and Clark National Forest, Forest Wide Prescribed Fire Project # 63783.

Specifically we would recommend this project be studied under a full Environmental Impact Statement as opposed to merely an Environmental Analysis. Given the scope of time the project is to remain in effect and large geographic area influenced by the E.A., the project needs more in depth research and study.

The mindset for decades has been that fires and insects are "BAD". Various studies in all types of forests and natural areas has indicated the opposite. Increased logging and clearing of forests makes way for increasing incidents of catastrophic forest fires by roads and those who desire to use those roads with powerful internal combustion engines such as dirt bikes and ATV/OHVs. The health of the forests of H.L&C National Forest are dependent on fire and insects.

In addition, all Inventoried Roadless Areas should be off limits to prescribed fire. Naturally caused fires should be allowed to take their course. It is widely believed that forest fires were suppressed in the past and that this is the reason for large extensive forest fires. This is false, take for instance the 1910 Fires in the Lolo and Clearwater National Forests. No fire suppression occurred there because there was no technology for it. All the right conditions came together then to bring about that fire. It happens. The result, The Great Burn, is a wonderful mosaic of meadows and forest. It was naturally changed and as a result, more naturally biologically diverse. Suppressing forest fires by whatever the tools, is a recent phenomenon to facilitate logging practices and to "SAVE" a builder of a "Trophy Home" in a national forest.

We urge the Forest Service, in all our national forests to pursue a program that purchases all inholdings in the authorized boundaries of the national forest system. This can be by done by outright purchase or conservation easement. In the long run this will be cheaper for the taxpayer than designing repetitive prescribed fire schemes and outright direct extinguishing of fires to protect trophy homes within the national forest system. Also, the less trophy homes, means less likely a forest fire will occur from cars, ATV, BBQ, utilities, fireworks, cigarette smokers and other activities builders of trophy homes engage in.

We did our part by purchasing an inholding in the George Washington National Forest, Virginia in September 2022. It consists of 88 acres of forest, meadows, river and streams bordering the proposed Lynn Hollow Wilderness. This is the Appalachian Mountain Forest area. We placed a conservation easement on the ENTIRE property with the Virginia Outdoors Foundation in 2023. No Trophy Homes or related infrastructure will be built here! The cabin on it was built in 1929-1930 and is 960 square feet in area. It will remain as "back to the basics", see the kitchen prep table we designed and built from old chestnut and cherry wood! The old log structure was built in 1865 to 1870!!!. We manage this land in accordance with strict conservation principles that complement the adjoining proposed wilderness. Native Riparian species are being planted and restored and exotics are being removed(Bamboo and Cirsium Vulgare) and no clearcutting or removal of large trees. Please come visit. You'll have to use the outdoor shower and outhouse. We are not typical land owners, we are stewards of the land and historic buildings.

See attached pictures of the land and Loy, yes Loy, partaking of a fine beverage.

Incidentally, we have excellent beef and bourbon!!

Sincerely,

Cliff and Pearl Bove